

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 QUITO 000857

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EC](#) [OAS](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING THE DIPCORPS ON ECUADORIAN STABILITY

REF: A. QUITO 585

[B](#). QUITO 852

[C](#). QUITO 850

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reason 1.4 (b)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Representatives from Quito's largest foreign missions gathered April 18 to discuss the ongoing political crisis in Ecuador. UN Judicial Rapporteur Leandro Despouy, who visited Ecuador March 13-18 (Ref A), weighed in via conference call. As non-US diplomats here are wont to do, the majority of participants provided long-winded analysis of Ecuador's problems but offered few ideas on moving forward. Poloffs introduced various suggestions on how diplomatic missions might help. Gaining greatest buy-in was the issuance of a "Friends of Ecuador" communique, calling for opposition-GoE dialogue, restraint by public forces, and a commitment to crafting an independent, effective judiciary. Support for an international mission to Ecuador was more tepid. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In late March, UN Mission Ecuador Director Mauricio Valdes called an urgent gathering of foreign diplomats and international organization officials. The purpose was to provide a copy of the draft judicial independence report Despouy was then presenting in Geneva, and discuss next steps. Chilean Ambassador Nelson Haddad hosted, with representatives from the embassies of the United States, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Holland (representing the EU), the IDB, World Bank, UN FAO, and OAS attending. Valdes requested a follow-up meeting April 18, and all but the Dutch and Argentines came; Despouy participated via telephone.

Big Talk, Small Action

[1](#)3. (C) Regrettably, the March performance proved the participants excellent analysts, but reluctant problem solvers (much like Despouy, in our opinion). Ecuador's problems were Ecuador's alone, they claimed; Latin American diplomatic tradition ruled out involvement in neighbors' internal problems. We disagreed. Gutierrez welcomed counsel from foreign leaders, and expressions of support from Lagos or Lula might awaken the president to the gravity of the situation and the need for real negotiation. Despite raising interest, the meeting terminated without formalized next steps.

[1](#)4. (C) Attendees of the April 18 get-together were similarly averse to talk specifics (although Spain's representative arrived with his foreign ministry's April 16 declaration in hand). The group agreed the situation had morphed from a judicial battle -- Congress's "institutional majority" having overhauled Ecuador's highest tribunals, perhaps unconstitutionally -- to a full-bore political impasse. Gutierrez faced a crucial week, with a handful of legislators already threatening renewed impeachment efforts. Thankfully, representatives had dropped their "no foreign involvement" inhibitions, owing mainly to a recently-passed Congressional resolution that vacated the Supreme Court and requested "international oversight" over the selection of new justices (Ref B).

Keeping Our Counterparts on Task

[1](#)5. (C) Seeing an opening, Poloffs urged their colleagues to display support for Ecuadorian political stability. Topping their suggestion list was a declaration, to be issued by the "Friends of Ecuador," that would call for serious negotiations between political players, responsible behavior by GoE military and police, and a commitment from all to establish a working judicial system. As a base, the document might use excellent statements earlier issued by the Embassy, UN, and Spanish MFA.

[1](#)6. (C) Foreign leaders still had roles to play, they continued. It was regrettable but reasonable that Chilean President Lagos had canceled his April 15-16 visit. Getting Lagos here soonest was vital, however, in that it offered Gutierrez a wonderful opportunity to appear presidential and

not petty. In the meantime, a Lagos call expressing support and urging compromise looked promising; so too calls from Lula and Spanish President Zapatero. Poloffs summarized Embassy actions in attempting to defuse the crisis, from the Ambassador's working breakfast with Gutierrez (Ref C) to Emboffs' calls on the GoE high command.

17. (C) Last, Poloffs sketched out a possible high-visibility international visit aimed at reducing political pressures and fomenting dialogue. Despite a paucity of real results, Despouy's Ecuador tour had bought the president time and prompted hope that a negotiated solution was possible. Gutierrez needed similar relief now. Recognizing that no international organization would intervene sans a GoE invitation, the Embassy was prepared to utilize its good offices in convincing the president such international intervention was needed.

A Cause for Optimism?

18. (C) Chilean Ambassador Haddad noted President Lagos already had telephoned Gutierrez, apologizing for canceling his visit but hoping to reschedule soon; on the need for respect for democratic order and dialog, the Chilean leader's talking points differed little from ours. Spanish diplomat Xavier Conde informed the group the EU had agreed to issue its own statement on Ecuador. GoS Foreign Minister Moratinos had urged compromise in a call to GoE counterpart Patricio Zuquilanda, Conde revealed, and he would pitch to Madrid a potential Zapatero-Gutierrez telcon. Cesar Ocampo, the OAS mission chief in Quito, agreed international "intervention" held promise, but, fearing competing, counter-productive initiatives, urged full coordination between organizations. The World Bank rep, noting he too had canceled a high-level official's visit to Ecuador, announced the organization's own statement would soon emerge, its call for compromise tracking closely with others. Only the Brazilian DCM demurred, seeing little benefit from a Lula call (his Ambassador had been more positive during the March meeting, however).

19. (C) All considered a possible "Friends" resolution worth pursuing, although the IDB official recognized the difficulty of clearing language through a dozen entities. UN Director Valdes volunteered to shepherd its preparation and approval. He would keep members apprised of progress at all times. Valdes also intended to meet with Guillermo Landazuri (ID), the author of the Congressional resolution calling for foreign observation over the Supreme Court selection process, in an attempt to clarify terms. Concluding the meeting, he convoked an April 20 meeting of international judicial assistance donors, the USG included, to coordinate possible technical assistance.

COMMENT:

10. (C) Those present at the March and April gatherings represent the cream of an otherwise cocktail-focused diplomatic crop. While uncertain they'll soon take action, the attitudinal improvement -- from "we don't want to get involved" to "this is what we've done so far," convinces us our counterparts are worth cultivating. With the savvy Valdes taking the lead, we are optimistic the "Friends" will generate at least a resolution draft. Obtaining support for an international mission looks harder, however, owing to institutional rivalry -- Valdes himself blanched when we first raised a potential OAS role here.

11. (C) Yet Ecuador needs its neighbors' help. Political polarization continues to worsen, with opposition Pachakutik announcing its intention to seek Gutierrez's impeachment, and protests now expanding outside Quito. Should the dipcorps not back a multilateral mission, we are prepared to act solo, and already are consulting with WHA and USOAS colleagues on the possible value of an OAS "political peacekeeping" team in Ecuador. In an April 19 telcon with the Ambassador, President Gutierrez welcomed support from abroad. Should Washington approve in theory, our next step entails coaching the GoE on spin control, since the opposition could conceivably paint the visit as proof Gutierrez cannot govern Ecuador without outside help.

KENNEY